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Ryan EDWARDSON, *Canuck Rock: A History of Canadian Popular Music*

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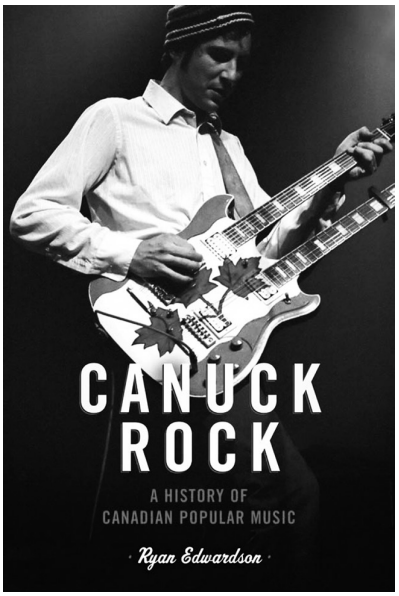
Ryan Edwardson, *Canuck Rock: A History of Canadian Popular Music*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2009.

Ryan Edwardson's *Canuck Rock: A History of Canadian Popular Music* is a well-researched and well-written text with a misleading title. Primarily, this book is about the music *industry* in English-speaking Canada, and readers looking for analysis of musical sound, the social and cultural significance of music performance, or any sustained attention to Québécois musicians and the thriving industry in Quebec will be disappointed. That said, what falls within Edwardson's scope is meticulously detailed—animated by personal interviews with major figures in the industry, excerpts from mainstream Canadian media, music journalism and industry publications—and compellingly told. Throughout *Canuck Rock*, Edwardson works against the idea of "Canadian music," refuting the claim that one can hear "Canadianness" in the music of certain artists (usually singer-songwriters like Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen, and Gordon Lightfoot). "Such nationalist narratives," Edwardson writes, are "certainly not honest in the face of the multinational reality" (214) and are inspired by fans' desires rather than the intentions of artists.



Edwardson's ten chapters fall into two thematic clusters. Chapters one through five offer a slightly Canadianized version of the conventional post-WWII Western popular music narrative. Edwardson very briefly chronicles the emergence of rock 'n' roll, the British invasion, the folk revival, and the counterculture, incorporating lesser-known Canadian artists and sensational reactions from Canadian media into the narrative. While his emphasis on certain performers—Rompin' Ronnie Hawkins and Ian & Sylvia, for example—serve as useful Canadian correctives to the dominant history of Western popular music, the work of teasing out "Canadianness" in the popular music cannon is done elsewhere in greater detail. (See, for example, Larry Starr, Christopher Waterman, and Jay Hodgson's *Rock: A Canadian Perspective*.)

Chapters six through ten are essays on topics that cluster around Canadian content legislation and the music industry in Canada. In "Legislated Radio," Edwardson begins with industry publication *RPM's* ten-part series—the original

call for Canadian content regulations for radio broadcasting—and subsequently reviews Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC) hearings in the early 1970s, elucidating the beginning of "the ideological fusion of music and national identity" (158) that would intensify in the next few years. "Oh What a Feeling" explores the disparate ways Canadian artists understood the regulations as well as the burgeoning nationalist imperative that was breaking down regional isolation. (This chapter features Edwardson's most developed work on Quebec nationalism and the role of musicians therein.) His subsequent chapter "The Nation's Music Station" surveys the presentation of popular music on Canadian television from the early 1960s to the late 1990s. These three chapters—rich with details and told by a historian passionate about the events—are Edwardson's best.

Ultimately, though, what stands out about this text is an absence of female musicians and their work. Of the text's thirty epigraphs, only four are quotes attributed to women (three of which are by Joni Mitchell). More striking, though, is the severe lack of female artists covered in a book that spans the mid 1950s to the early 2000s. Céline Dion, Shania Twain, Sarah McLachlan and Alanis Morissette, among others, are barely mentioned. When they are, they are incorporated in a list of artists or used to discuss another subject entirely. The book's primary paragraph on Dion, for example, tells of her "rebuking" at the 1990 Association du disque, de l'industrie du spectacle québécois et de la vidéo, when she was named anglophone artist of the year. As Andrea Warner shows in her new book *We Oughta Know: How Four Women Ruled the '90s and Changed Canadian Music*, these four women are not only among the best selling artists within Canada—Dion is first, followed immediately by Morissette and Twain; McLachlan is sixth, after Whitney Houston and U2—but are also responsible for transforming the pop music landscape internationally. This imbalance is intensified by the text's attempt to rehash the development of popular music pre-Canadian content regulations: though subtitled "A History of Canadian Popular Music," the book spills far more ink on the Beatles (index citations covering 23 pages) and Bill Haley (18 pages) *each* than on Morissette (5 pages), Twain (4 pages), Dion (3 pages), and McLachlan (2 pages) combined. This is not a clean break along gendered lines—Rush (3 pages) and April Wine (not in index) are also largely absent—but is a reminder that histories of Western popular music consistently remain histories of white male baby boomer Western popular music.

Craig Jennex

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Warner Andrea (2015), *We Oughta Know: How Four Women Ruled the 90s and Changed Canadian Music*, Toronto, Eternal Cavalier Press.